



Filipino tourism frontliners recognized during DOT's 50th founding anniversary celebration



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**Adopt A DOTree:
Stewards for the environment**



**Golden Strides:
50 Years of Tourism**



**DOT Secretary's Cup:
Camaraderie and sportsmanship**



Adopt A DOTree: Stewards for the environment



In a meaningful celebration of the Department of Tourism's (DOT) 50th Founding Anniversary, close to 200 employees joined the officials led by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco for a tree planting activity at Mount Purro Nature Reserve in Antipolo City last May 10.

The nature reserve is a product of a 35-year environmental quest of Toto Malvar and his family, with the help of the Dumagat Indigenous People, to transform an important land area of the Upper Marikina Watershed into the well-loved ecotourism site that it is known today. It started as a grassroots strategy for reforestation and watershed rehabilitation after the chunk of land was damaged by strong typhoons and heavy rainfall which hit Metro Manila for the past decades.

In her speech, the tourism chief expressed her utmost respect and admiration to the efforts made to the beautiful nature reserve, citing that the area reminded her of the mountain barangays of Liloan town in Cebu where she served as a local chief executive for three terms prior to assuming the role as tourism secretary just last year.

"I am the one who's very honored to meet our Dumagat community, Sir Toto, and to all of you here who have worked so hard these past 35 years to build such an inspiring Mountain Reserve. Papunta palang ako dito, I was feeling very nostalgic already because one year ago today, I was actually elected for the third time as mayor of Liloan, and that as I was approaching the mountains of this beautiful City of Antipolo, it really reminded me of my mountain barangays in Liloan. Being here reminds me of that which is most important in all of the things that we do in government, and that is to be stewards for the environment, so that this and the next generation can enjoy the blessings that we have all had the privilege of enjoying our entire lives," she said.

Secretary Frasco then emphasized the importance of caring for the environment by starting with the basics—such as planting a tree.

"While the environment is chiefly within the mandate of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, it is deeply intertwined with our mandate in the Department of Tourism because our purpose is not only to bring in the hordes of tourists both from our international as well as our local destinations, but also to ensure that we inspire and we encourage our tourists to always leave the place better than when they found it."

"And what better way to send out that most important message than to start within ourselves to remember the value of going back to basics—planting a tree—caring for that and adopting a mindset that we are all responsible for the longevity of our tourism destinations," she said.

Thanking the officials and employees who participated in the celebration, she likewise noted that the roles of officials and employees were not just confined to the corners of the office but how the actual work was translated on a nationwide scale.

"You all play a very important role in the life of tourism in the Philippines. Never think that your role is confined to the confines of your office because the impact of the work that each and every single person does in the Department of Tourism is nationwide. So, I urge you that in everything that you do, always make sure that you do it with love, love of our country, love for the Filipino people, and love for yourselves and your families, because we're doing important work here," she said.

Secretary Frasco concluded her speech by manifesting the unequivocal support to such initiatives that would put a premium on tourism in the Philippines, thereby becoming "stewards for the environment."

"And the trees that we are planting today, we are contributing to the good work that Sir Toto and the Dumagat community had safeguarded all these many decades. They truly are an example to be emulated. You can rest assured of my and the Department of Tourism's unequivocal support to bring in more tourists and to educate them through you all the importance of being stewards for the environment," she said. **DOT**



Golden Strides: 50 Years of Tourism

As part of the celebration of the DOT's 50th Founding Anniversary, the Department of Tourism (DOT) rallied around 1,700 participants to join the inaugural Tourism Run, a friendly race dedicated to the tourism industry, held last May 7 in Roxas Boulevard in Metro Manila.

The first-ever DOT-initiated friendly race gathered employees of Departments and its attached agencies, including the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), Nayong Pilipino Foundation (NPF), Philippine Commission on Sports SCUBA Diving - PCSSD, Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB), Intramuros Administration (IA), Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA, and TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority, as well as partner tourism stakeholders, members of the armed forces, and fitness enthusiasts.

Tourism Run Winners

The Department of Tourism (DOT) recognized the

Tourism Run winners in both men's and women's divisions of the three, five, and ten-kilometer race categories.

The footrace, which was open to everyone of all abilities, promoted physical fitness, improved mental health, and a holistic, healthy lifestyle for all participants.

This is another way of fostering camaraderie among the DOT family and showing appreciation for their continuous hard work that benefits not just the Department, but also the whole tourism industry.

"Nagpapasalamat po kami sa event na isinagawa ngayon, then first ko ulit since nung nag pandemic. So, sobrang saya po namin na nakapaglaro kami sa event na ito at first time ko din po na meet si Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco then sa lahat po na nag-officiate po ng event, sobrang maganda po 'yong ginawa nilang pagbabantay sa lahat ng tumakbo and other than that, thank you po and mabuhay po tayong lahat," shared Philippine Army Private First Class Albert Valencia, the men's winner of the three-kilometer lane in 10:14 minutes. **DOT**



DOT SECRETARY'S CUP



Cheers and chants at the center stage

An adrenaline rush was felt during the Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary's Cup that began last April 24. Employees of the Department and its attached agencies took time off to play in friendly competitions to mark the DOT's 50th year.

The Tourism Infrastructure Zone Authority (TIEZA), the DOT's infrastructure arm, took home the first win at the cheering competition. Coming in 1st Runner-Up and 2nd Runner-Up are the teams from the DOT and National Parks Development Committee, respectively.

Among the sports competitions for the DOT 50th anniversary celebration are track and field, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, swimming, chess, darts, basketball, and bowling.

The participating DOT attached agencies are as follows: TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB), National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA, Philippine Commission on Sports SCUBA Diving - PCSSD, Nayong Pilipino Foundation, and Intramuros Administration. **DOT**



Kings of the Hard Court

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Men's Basketball Team dominated the finals of the Secretary's Cup 2023 - Basketball Tournament, crushing the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) in a one-sided affair, 63-39.

With this win, the team was crowned the first-ever champions of the tournament at San Andres Coliseum in Malate, Manila.

The unstoppable Mark Hildawa-powered DOT team eliminated all opposition before knocking off TPB in the grand finale.

"We are the Champs!!! Thank you sa mga sumuporta, DOT family! Thank you Sec. (Christina Garcia) Frasco for giving us the opportunity to showcase our talent in sports. Para sayo 'to brod Allan Alcid!'", DOT Basketball Team Captain Hildawa said after the inspired win dedicated to the team's fallen colleague.

In the opening quarter, DOT got off to a flying start, scoring a whopping 15 points against TPB's measly six.

TPB tried to mount a comeback in the second quarter, outscoring DOT to finish halftime at 23-17, but the Gold and White team wasn't deterred and kept pushing.

DOT hit all bases, scoring an impressive 29 points in the third quarter, hiking their lead to 52-31.

TPB made a valiant effort to play catch-up in the final quarter but was no match for DOT's offensive gameplay before finally surrendering the title.

In an earlier match, the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC) secured third place after narrowly defeating the Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA.

Congratulations to all participating teams, which include the TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority, Intramuros Administration (IA), and Nayong Pilipino Foundation (NPF)! **DOT**





Queens of the Volleyball Court

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Women's Volleyball Team stomped its class against all its opponents to be hailed as the inaugural queens of the Secretary's Cup 2023 - Volleyball Tournament last May 5 held at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum in Malate, Manila.

In the tightly contested championship match against the TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), the DOT had to fight hard to secure a 2-1 victory and earn the golden crown.

The first two sets were a game of deadlocks and lead changes, with the DOT winning the opening set 25-21, while TIEZA rallied back to even the match at 22-25.

However, the DOT, led by Sarah Monroy's impressive attacks and kills, punished TIEZA's floor defense in the final set to finish with a lopsided 25-13 win.

"We focused on our goal. We encouraged each other para mailabas namin yung best ng isa't isa. All throughout the league, the team really worked hard para manalo at makuha ang championship. A massive thank you to our Secretary for this cup. All of us had the opportunity to connect and build the camaraderie in our team. And ofcourse, to our DOT family, we are really thankful for your all out support," said Monroy, the DOT's leading scorer.

TIEZA, the top seed in bracket A, took home silver, while the Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA copped bronze after disposing of the National Parks Development Committee (NPDC) in the battle for third place in straight sets.

The DOT's victory was hard-earned, as they had to overcome tough opponents to reach the finals. In the semifinals, the DOT came from a set down to defeat the PRA and secure their spot in the championship match. Meanwhile, TIEZA dominated their semifinal match against NPDC in straight sets to qualify for the finals.

The Secretary's Cup 2023 - Volleyball Tournament was organized as part of the DOT's 50th founding anniversary celebration and featured the DOT's attached agencies, including the Intramuros Administration (IA), and the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB), and aimed to promote sportsmanship and camaraderie among the DOT family. **DOT**



Fending off feathered foes

The TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority emerged victorious in the Secretary's Cup - Badminton Tournament held last May 3, shutting down all competition to take home the championship crown.

Throughout the elimination round, the TIEZA badminton team demonstrated their exceptional skills and determination by sweeping all of their assignments before handing the Department of Tourism (DOT) a 3-0 beating in the finals.

TIEZA lorded over the DOT shuttlers in all three categories, winning the men's doubles (21-9, 21-2), women's doubles (21-13, 21-11), and mixed doubles (21-13, 21-8) matches in straight sets. The TIEZA team's impressive performance and coordinated effort in all categories cemented their status as the undisputed champions of the tournament.

"We are all proud and grateful for the opportunity given to us by our ever-supportive COO Mark Lapid to represent TIEZA in the badminton event. We are likewise thankful to Secretary Maria Christina Frasco and to the Department of Tourism for having this activity which showcased the skillfulness and discipline of all the athletes from different agencies in the Tourism family. We believe that more than winning the individual sports event, having this rare chance to celebrate and bond with the Tourism family in this momentous experience, already, makes us all winners," said Thirdy Lorico, one of the esteemed players from team TIEZA.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) secured the third-place finish against the Intramuros Administration (IA) after a hard-fought rally in the men's and mixed doubles pairings.

Overall, the Secretary's Cup - Badminton Tournament served as a thrilling event that showcased the best badminton players under the DOT and its attached agencies while strengthening camaraderie and friendship among colleagues in the tourism industry. **DOT**



DOT SECRETARY'S CUP



Bullseye: darting to victory

The dartboards were set ablaze as the DOT Secretary's Cup 2023 Darts Competition took flight at the Philippine Sports Commission Badminton VIP Room last April 28.

The Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA hit the bullseye with their sharp aim and strategic throws in the singles category for a 5-1 win-loss record, securing the top spot after seven rounds.

Coming in close to PRA, the DOT landed on the same 5-1 win-loss tally on the first day of the tournament, but was ranked second due to the win-over-the-other rule.

In a three-way tie, the Intramuros Administration (IA), the TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), and the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) darted their way to third place with an identical 3-3 slate. **DOT**



Swimmers making waves

The Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agencies went head-to-head in a splashing good time at the Secretary's Cup 2023 Swimming Competition held at the Philippine Sports Commission Rizal Memorial Complex - Swimming Center last April 28.

The competition was nothing short of fierce, but in the end, the TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority came out on top, taking home the gold in both the men's and relay divisions.

The Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA had a strong showing and snagged the silver in the men's division, with DOT holding on for the bronze in the five-team pool.

Intramuros Administration (IA) finished in second place in the relay category, followed by DOT in third.

The ladies were just as competitive, with the IA taking the win in the women's lane. DOT and TIEZA weren't far behind, clocking in at second and third place, respectively. **DOT**



The Fastest of them all

After the dust has settled, it was the Intramuros Administration (IA), National Parks Development Committee (NPDC), and Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA that emerged as the fastest teams in the recently concluded Secretary's Cup 2023 - Track and Field Competition held at the Rizal Memorial Track Field last May 2.

In the mixed 8x400 meter dash, the IA Track Team displayed their speed and crossed the finish line with a commanding lead at 1:05:11, with NPDC coming after at 1:13:74 and TIEZA at 1:17:24.

The men's 100-meter dash saw a thrilling competition, with NPDC winning the gold medal with a time of 13.23 minutes, closely followed by PRA at 13.99 minutes and TIEZA at 14.55 minutes.

In the women's 100-meter dash, it was the PRA who emerged victorious, clocking in a time of 16.80 minutes, followed by the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) at 17.23 minutes and TIEZA at 17.61 minutes.

The Secretary's Cup 2023 - Track and Field Competition showcased not only the athletic prowess of the teams, which also included the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Nayong Pilipino Foundation (NPF), but also their teamwork, sportsmanship, and dedication to their respective agencies.

Congratulations to all the winners! **DOT**





Smashing their way to victory

The Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agency, Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA, demonstrated their competitive spirit to triumph at the inaugural Secretary's Cup 2023 - Table Tennis Competition held at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex (RMSC) Swimming VIP Lounge last May 3.

The DOT table tennis team dominated the women's singles and mixed doubles divisions, dropping only one game throughout the tournament. The DOT's impressive skills and teamwork earned them the top spot, while Intramuros Administration (IA) finished second with the same number of match points but lost on the "win-over-the-other" rule.

"Everyone did their best. We helped each other to overcome our weaknesses kahit kakastart lang maglaro ng iba. Manalo or matalo, inenjoy namin yung game and tried to improve ourselves throughout the event kaya proud ako sa team. Thank you sa lahat ng nagsupport from DOT family, to all organizers, and to our dear Secretary for organizing such a great event. Congratulations DOT!" said DOT Table Tennis Team Captain Nestor Macababad.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) ranked third in the women's singles category, and the TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority secured second runner-up honors in the mixed doubles category.

In the men's singles, PRA and DOT battled it out for the top spot with identical 11 match points. In the end, PRA emerged victorious, while DOT settled for second place. National Parks Development Committee (NPDC) finished closely behind in third place with 10 match points. **DOT**



Checkmate challenge

In an intense showdown of tactics and strategies, the DOT Chess team dominated across the board in the first day of the Secretary's Cup 2023 Chess Tournament at the Philippine Sports Commission - VIP Room last April 28.

Dropping only two games in seven matches, DOT outwitted all its attached agencies to finish atop the standings with 22 game points.

The National Parks Development Committee (NPDC) and Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (TPB) put up a valiant fight and ended up tied for second place with 15 points each. The Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA trailed the competition at 14 points, rounding up the top four.

The top four teams will square off in another round to determine the chess champion. **DOT**





The Inaugural Champions

The Department of Tourism (DOT) emerged as the overall champions of the inaugural Secretary's Cup 2023, personally bestowed by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco at the Quirino Grandstand, Manila, at the sidelines of the Tourism Run last May 7.

The DOT sports team finished first across all the sports events with 270 big points, while the TIEZA - Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority finished as the 1st runner-up with 250 points, followed by the Philippine Retirement Authority - PRA (PRA) as the 2nd runner-up with 220.

With the DOT family sports tournament staging nine events for a total of 15 titles, the Gold and White flaunted their skills by ruling four tournaments to capture their first Secretary's Cup general title.

This season's host DOT harvested 270 points built on championships in Men's Basketball, Women's Volleyball, Women's Single Table Tennis, and Table Tennis Mixed Doubles with bridesmaids finish at Badminton, Chess, Darts, Men's Single Table Tennis, and Women's Swimming.

The DOT's Swimming Relay finished at the podium with bronze while placing 4th in Bowling and Track and Field Relay.

TIEZA finished second with 250 points after winning gold medals in Badminton, Bowling, Men's Swimming, and Swimming Relay and silver in Women's Volleyball.

The infrastructure arm also registered third-place finishes at Darts, Table Tennis Mixed, and all Track and Field events (100-meter dash men's and women's, and 8x400 mixed relay). TIEZA also bagged the maiden cheerdance championship, which is a non-scoring sport.

PRA completed the overall podium at third place with 220 points, highlighted by the Darts, Table Tennis Men's Singles, Track and Field Women's championships; Track and Field Men's and Swimming Men's second place finishes; Table Tennis Women's, Chess, and Women's volleyball third place finishes.

Intramuros Administration (215), National Parks Development Committee (185), Tourism Promotions Board Philippines (180), and Nayong Pilipino Foundation (120) completed the rankings in order.

Each championship is awarded 25 points, with silver receiving 20 points, bronze receiving 15 points, 10 points being awarded for 4th place onwards, and five points for non-entry. **DOT**





Filipino tourism frontliners recognized during DOT's 50th founding anniversary celebration

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To celebrate the Department of Tourism's (DOT) 50th founding anniversary last May 11, officials of the Department led by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco gathered tour guides and leaders of tour guide associations to a simple reception at the Casa Blanca in Intramuros, as a way to recognize the frontliners' efforts to champion Philippine tourism amid the pandemic and various challenges.

"Today we mark the 50 years of the Department of Tourism. And I felt it necessary to celebrate this day not only with the officials and employees of the Department of Tourism but, most importantly, with those that have been in the frontlines of tourism who have carried upon their shoulders the responsibility of campaigning for our country, of convincing our friends from all the world to keep coming back to our country, and who have by their example--by your example--shown us what it means to love the Philippines," Secretary Frasco said as she delivered her message at the lunch with tourism frontliners.

"I could not find it in my heart to celebrate it with anybody else other than our frontliners," she added.

Speaking before some 50 leaders of the Federation of Professional Tour Guides Association Inc. (TGFED), as well as NCR-based associations such as the Accredited Tourist Guides Services Cooperatives Inc. (ACTSCOOP), Fort Santiago Volunteer Tour Guides, Inc., GUIDES INC. (NCR Multi-Lingual Tour Guides Association, Japanese-Speaking Tour Guides Association (JASTA), Multi-Lingual Accredited Tour Guides Association of the Philippines (MULATGAP), and the Philippine Association of Accredited Tour Guide Lecturers, Inc. (PAATGLI), and tour guides, Secretary Frasco took the time to share her experiences as three term Mayor of Liloan in Cebu before her appointment as the country's DOT Chief.

Noting how her previous post allowed her to see first-hand how the tourism industry was devastated and deprived

by the pandemic, Secretary Frasco said, *"Therefore, it is a sense of urgency that I would like to bring to the Department, as well as a local perspective. One that always takes into consideration the welfare, the opinions, the concerns, of those who are on the ground and in the frontlines. Because I firmly believe that none of our tourism projects and plans can succeed if we are unable to translate into actual implementation by our tourism frontliners."*

To recall, the DOT initially organized a listening forum with tour guides and associations in March, where no less than Secretary Frasco underscoring the invaluable role that tourism frontliners such as tour guides play in the realization of the Department's endeavors, particularly in promoting the country's rich culture and heritage.

As she cited the country's recent global accolades, Secretary Frasco said it is incumbent upon the DOT to support those that continue to champion the Philippines, which include the tour guides, tour operators, travel agents, as well as each and every single component of the tourism value chain that contribute to the success of our industry.

As a token of appreciation for the tourism frontliners' dedication, Secretary Frasco personally gifted each of the attendees with goodie baskets filled with essentials that they may find useful in carrying out their duties as tour guides, including a lapel microphone, sunglasses, hat, and other accessories.

"Every time that you go out in the field and share the Filipino story, you help our Filipino families that are dependent on the tourism industry, you help in nation building, you help our country rise to its full potential. So I urge you, our dear tour guides, to continue to tell the good news about the Philippines, to continue to tell the Filipino story with love," Secretary Frasco enthused.

Also at the lunch reception with tourism frontliners are Undersecretary Ferdinand Jumapao, DOT-NCR Regional Director Sharlene Zabala-Batin, and Intramuros Administrator Atty. Joan Padilla. **DOT**

Frasco welcomes new, regularized, promoted employees to DOT family

Newly hired and promoted employees of the Department of Tourism (DOT) were all smiles last May 24 as they attended the Meet and Greet opportunity with Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and officials.

Fifty-six out of the 66 employees from the DOT's Central and Regional Offices whose appointments were issued between January to May of this year, proudly took their Oath of Office before Secretary Frasco.

Delivering a message of inspiration, Secretary Frasco acknowledged the employees, which include new entrants of the Department; Job Order (JO) personnel who have been regularized; organic employees who have been promoted; as well as co-terminous employees.

"I've not been here long. Many of you have been here for longer than I. And even if I am a newcomer to this Department, I have seen the struggles of the tourism industry coming from Cebu. So what I can assure you is this: while we may differ in approach, in certain instances, or even in the pace with which we conduct our work, our common ground is we know what we have lost, we know what is at stake, and we all love our country," Secretary Frasco said.

She also reminded the employees of the special role that they hold in the realization of the tourism recovery plans of the national government, which have been laid out under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.



"And I always say this to our employees, old and new: never think that the level of work or salary grade that you occupy diminishes your contribution to the Department. Each and every one of you contribute greatly to the work that we are trying to do for the recovery of tourism. You occupy the privileged position of instituting change, not just in our policies, programs, or projects, but change in the lives of Filipinos, Filipino families. So what I ask of you is to repay this privilege that you have been given to our fellow Filipinos, by devoting yourselves to your duty to your country, your duty to work, your duty to exercise care and compassion, your duty to undertake the difficult work that is at hand, not just to promote the Philippines, but really to transform it by addressing the pillars for development that still need attention," she added.

To capture the happy moments and to give a warm welcome to the employees—who were clad in their best Filipiniana and corporate attire—Secretary Frasco together with DOT Undersecretaries Mae Elaine T. Bathan, Shereen Gail Yu-Pamintuan, Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, and Ferdinand Jumapao, indulged in photo ops and shared light snacks with the employees.

Also present at the Meet and Greet event were OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Maria Rica Bueno, and Directors of the DOT Central and Regional Offices. The Meet and Greet with the Secretary is one of the components of the DOT's Comprehensive Onboarding of Regular Employees (CORE) program pursuant to Department Order No. 2022-043. **DOT**

More than 43k workers receive DOT training on the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence

By: Office of Industry Manpower Development

The Department of Tourism (DOT) has so far successfully trained a total of 43,813 individuals nationwide on the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE), steadily closing in on its target of 100K trained individuals for 2023.

To recall, Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco had announced last year that for the first time, the Department of Tourism would be embarking on an aggressive tourism education and training campaign for 100,000 Filipino frontline tourism workers.

"We recognize that Filipino hospitality is one of the greatest strengths of Philippine Tourism that could enhance the overall tourist experience and strategically position the Philippines as a center for hospitality excellence in Asia. We are very happy to report that, through the combined hard work of the DOT Central and Regional Offices, our trainers, and all of our partners in the public and private sector who have exerted efforts to reach out to the workers in the entire tourism value chain, we are well on our way in achieving our goal of providing FBSE trainings to 100,000 workers. With this, we are able to banner Filipino hospitality excellence to both our domestic and international tourists," said Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, who earlier revealed the DOT's goal during the national government's Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023-2028 Forum.

Region 4A (CALABARZON) delivered the highest number of FBSE trainees with 6,376, followed by Region 11 with 5,788, Region 3 with 5,783, Region 4B (MIMAROPA) with 3,920, and the National Capital Region (NCR) with 3,742.

The training recipients consists of the vast expanse of the tourism workforce including tourism professionals and members of Community-based Sustainable Tourism Organizations (CBTOs); representatives from the academe including teachers and students of tourism and hospitality programs; government personnel from national and local government units; Tourist-Oriented Police for Community Order and Protection (TOPCOPs); and those engaged in other tourism-related enterprises and services such as restaurants, retail, ticketing, transportation, pasalubong centers, among others.

Skills enhancement, employability for all

Upholding inclusivity in its training offerings, the DOT also ensures that its training programs are designed to provide all tourism frontliners, including persons with disabilities (PWDs), with a benchmark on how to render excellent services to tourists the Filipino way.

Last May 26-27, 2022, the DOT through its



MIMAROPA Office conducted the FBSE for Deaf Tourism Workers in Puerto Princesa City, primarily for employees of the Ka Inato Restaurant which employs PWDs—deaf individuals—as food servers and kitchen staff in their establishment since 2013.

"We started helping the deaf community in 2013 because yung opportunity sa kanila nakita namin na wala talagang open job opportunity para sa kanila. So, ano kase ako nag serve ako sa Rotary Club dito sa Puerto Princesa and one of my projects is Hearing Screening and to find out na ang Palawan is one of the [highest in] hearing impaired persons in MIMAROPA," Mr. Eric John Yayen, Ka Inato Restaurant Owner, said.

"Parang nabuhayan kasi sila, matagal silang [nawala] at the pandemic. So nung magkaroon ng training parang bumukas yung opportunity sa kanila, so nagpapasalamat talaga kami sa DOT," he remarked.

Alternative livelihood trainings for oil spill-affected tourism workers

As part of its sustained efforts to assist tourism stakeholders in the various communities in Oriental Mindoro gravely affected by the oil spill incident in the waters off Naujan, the DOT also commenced alternative livelihood training programs for tourism workers in the province, successfully training some 270 individuals as of April 27.

Training topics include Farm Tourism - Urban Gardening, Tourism Micro Retail - Beadmaking, Food Tourism - Kulinarya Training, Health & Wellness Tourism - Hilot Training, and Basic Haircutting, among others. The FBSE component is also infused in all of the DOT's training offerings to the oil spill-affected tourism workers. **DOT**





Medical Tourism pushed by Marcos Administration with strategic global partnership – DOT Chief

The Philippines is positioning the country as an emerging medical and wellness tourism destination in Asia with the Department of Tourism's (DOT) recent partnership with a global leader in the medical and wellness industry.

The tourism chief made the announcement last May 5 as the DOT formally inked an agreement with Dubai-based Agora Group, the "pioneer and leader in providing business solutions and productivity in the health and wellness tourism", to be a partner for the prestigious and high-level gathering of tourism stakeholders and medical professionals at the First International Health and Wellness Tourism Congress (IHWTC) 2023. The event is slated for June 8 to 9, 2023 in Dusseldorf, Germany.

The agreement was formalized by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and Agora Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Hadi Malaeb, at one of the country's leading medical facilities, The Medical City in Pasig.

In her remarks, the tourism chief emphasized that the event is a manifestation of how the DOT, under the Marcos Administration, conveys its "seriousness" in prioritizing medical tourism as a marketable product around the world. In a bid to strengthen the Philippines' position as a health and wellness tourism hub in Asia, as well as globally.

"We are giving the Philippines a fighting chance at becoming a tourism powerhouse in Asia. And we recognize that medical tourism and wellness tourism hold one of the keys to this endeavor, because we have the people, we have the facilities, and we are adjusting government policies to ensure that the climate for medical tourism to thrive will ensue," she said.

Philippines, a viable global destination for medical and wellness tourism

The Philippines' intent to sponsor the global congress is anchored on the current strategic position and potentials as a "serious regional contender." This, as the DOT is currently operating under the 7-point agenda embodied in the National Tourism Development Plan for 2023-2028, particularly, the diversification of product portfolio through multidimensional tourism, thus, the aggressive push for the development of a highly competitive health and wellness tourism product.

In fact, the Philippines has 23 health facilities internationally accredited and recognized by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). In terms of ease of access to care, there are 63 private hospitals in close proximity to four international airports with almost no waiting time for appointments and treatment. These, apart from the Philippines' cost of treatments that are competitively lower compared to Western countries and other countries within Asia.

The Philippines is also one of the biggest English-speaking countries in the world where hospitals employ English-speaking healthcare workers and are mostly recognized by foreign insurance companies.

Secretary Frasco then emphasized that the partnership with Agora is a welcome development for the industry as it conveys great confidence in the potential of the Philippines as a next emerging medical health and wellness destination in Asia.

With the Philippines' natural wonders that have been recognized numerous times not only in Asia but in the global arena, the Secretary also added that traveling visitors can "heal after their procedure" on the beach, in the mountains, and they can also enjoy delicious Filipino food and the distinct brand of Filipino hospitality. In the case of medical tourism, the Philippines is also offering the signature Filipino "hilot" at various tourism-accredited resorts and spas in the country.

"We are also looking at our islands, including Boracay, as a potential destination for Filipino wellness as well as CALABARZON that have a host of wonderful offerings in terms of wellness," the tourism chief added.

She also puts emphasis on how special the Philippine medical healthcare workers are, primarily the Filipino diaspora.

"Everywhere that I've been in the world since becoming Secretary of Tourism and I say this all the time. I've always heard a positive story about a Filipino worker abroad and mostly it's about doctors, nurses, and caregivers, stories from foreigners who have felt the compassion, the care, the commitment to duty, and the willingness to go the extra mile to help those in need. That diaspora is very well replicated in all our medical personnel here in the Philippines, wherever you may find yourself in our over 7,000 islands and that is why we are very confident in pitching for the Philippines as the next emerging medical tourism and wellness destination in Asia," she said.

Further, she emphasized that under the Marcos Administration, the focus is to improve the essential pillars of tourism development such as the building of tourism infrastructure, enhancing connectivity, and digitalization of processes recognizing as well the need to further enhance the availability of medical tourism facilities across the country.

Apart from hard infrastructure, the DOT is also improving

soft infrastructure by embarking on an ambitious goal to train 100,000 tourism frontliners this year under its Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) program.

More opportunities for PH tourism workers

In a media interview, Secretary Frasco expounded that the partnership with Dubai-based Agora Group for the International Health and Wellness Tourism Congress would also open massive opportunities for the country's health and wellness offerings and to market the Philippines, especially from the most coveted Middle East tourist market.

Asked specifically how the Philippines will attract more visitors for this aspect as it competes with other countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar with prime healthcare facilities, the tourism chief recognized that those countries already have the "wealth of medical facilities." But she said what gives the Philippines an advantage is "the culture of care and compassion shown by Filipinos who are in these facilities give us the strategic advantage that people from the Middle East are already familiar with the level of care that Filipinos can give."

Pursuing Medical Tourism

In 2004, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo through Executive Order No. 372 identified service industries which the Philippines has the potential to be globally competitive which included health and wellness, among others.

In pursuit of the objective of the DOT to diversify its portfolio, Secretary Frasco underscored the potential of medical tourism in ensuring the growth of the Philippine tourism industry.

"When I first came into the fold of the department, one of the things that we discussed was how we can engage with our partners in the medical tourism and wellness sector. The towards that has been through collaboration with our medical tourism partners, our wellness providers, as well as our government agencies involved in ensuring that the policies that are in place to fashion this as a marketable product around the world are in such a manner that it would ensure the growth of this industry," she added.

In its initial presentation to the DOT, Agora Group Dubai estimated the global health and wellness tourism to be worth \$45.5

to \$72 billion, with 14 to 16 million cross border patients and an average spend of \$3,800 to \$6,000 per visit.

International Health and Wellness Tourism Congress (IHWTC) 2023

The two-day IHWTC 2023 stands to be an important platform for promoting the health and wellness tourism offerings of the Philippines which is also a high-level closed-door gathering of tourism stakeholders mostly from the medical and wellness industry who will come only by invitation, and with an expectant 100 corporate buyers with a combined budget of \$2 billion.

"The signing of this partnership with Agora is one that we welcome with great hope and optimism knowing that it's been in the pipeline for 20 years," she said, adding that this would also open up massive opportunities for the country's health and wellness offerings and to market the Philippines especially from the most coveted Middle East tourist market.

For his part, Malaeb expressed his gratitude to the DOT for sponsoring the global event, citing that he himself has expressed the world-renowned Filipino brand of hospitality.

"Thank you all for the effort and the welcoming of hospitality that I have witnessed since I arrived here. Huge thank you to the Department of Tourism for being the title sponsor of the event," Malaeb said.

"I am very proud to be a partner of the Department of Tourism of the Philippines in order to promote the destination as a medical and wellness destination to some of the best and largest buyers of that product and service in the world," he added.

The Medical City President and CEO Dr. Eugenio Jose Ramos also thanked both parties for choosing the hospital as the venue for such momentous event.

"It a pleasure and honor that you have chosen The Medical City as the institution that would sponsor this Memorandum of Agreement signing between the Philippines, through the Secretary and Mr. Hadi," he said.

The event was also witnessed by DOT OIC-Undersecretary for Tourism Development Verna Buensuceso, Office of Product and Market Development (OPMD) Director Paulo Benito Tugbang, and Agora Group Philippine Representative Angel Bognot.

DOT





Halal Food Festival Celebrations



Experience the taste of diversity as Halal Food Festival makes its debut at the Department of Tourism (DOT) Central Office in Makati last May 08.

The two-day food fest celebrates the recent Muslim Festival that marked the culmination of the Holy Month of Ramadan, the Eid'l Fitr.

Underscoring President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s directives for the DOT, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said that the Department has since exerted "full and unequivocal support for Mindanao's development not just an attractive destination, but an economic tool for the people of Mindanao to be able to enjoy the benefits of tourism in those regions."

"We recognize as well the huge potential that Halal tourism had in the past few years, but we acknowledge that there are still ways to go in terms of fully developing halal tourism for the Philippines," she said, referring to Halal as a tourism product that should be supported not only in Mindanao but in the entire Philippines.

She also emphasized the objective of the event as a way to "send out the message of just how important the development of Halal tourism is to us because this exhibit will serve as a daily reminder of all our officials and our employees in the DOT that halal tourism, Mindanao tourism, is a priority under this administration."

"Our support for the full reopening of Mindanao to tourism is not limited to developing halal products alone, but is also focused on addressing the essential pillars for tourism development in general," Secretary Frasco remarked.

"One of those steps is to bring Halal tourism outside the confines of Mindanao, and to bring attention to it no less than here in the center of tourism governance as far as the Department of Tourism is concerned and that is the Central Office," she added.

Witnessing the opening of the Halal Food Festival is Department of Trade and Industry Assistant Secretary Glenn Peñaranda. He is joined by DOT Undersecretaries Myra Paz Valderosa Abubakar and Ferdinand Jumapao. DOT Assistant Secretaries Reynaldo Ching and Christopher Morales are also in attendance.

Other important guests gracing the event are Dr. Gino Ilano, and Mr. Datubimban Pangonotan Jr., as well the Hon. Sultan Faisal Cuyogan Bansao, a Halal board member, as well as Brgy. Captain Khalil Pondoma.

Showcasing a wide array of Halal cuisines and food products, the Halal Food Festival is open to all DOT employees and the public who want to get a taste and glimpse of Muslim's rich and colorful culture and foodscape. **DOT**

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Department of Tourism,
3rd Flr., DOT Bldg., Sen. Gil

Puyat Ave., Makati

Email: dot_media@tourism.gov.ph

Website: beta.tourism.gov.ph

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DOT vows support to SOCCSKSARGEN, Mindanao

Isulan, Sultan Kudarat - In a bid to further position the Philippines as a tourism powerhouse in Asia, the Department of Tourism (DOT) will prioritize the promotion of emerging and lesser-known destinations across the country and highlight the Filipino culture and identity, according to tourism chief Christina Frasco.

Addressing a crowd of some 200 guests composed of tourism stakeholders, local executives and officials, foreign retirees, expatriates, and diplomats attending the Bisita, Be My Guest grand launch in SOCCSKSARGEN (South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City) last May 19, Secretary Frasco underscored the commitment of the DOT under the Marcos Administration to give equal opportunities for tourism development and promotion, which puts emphasis on providing opportunities to lesser-known destinations.

"Our President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos, Jr. very early on articulated in his administration that tourism is a priority, recognizing the power that tourism holds as far as its ability to change the lives of our fellow Filipinos. No other industry is able to give such a great opportunity for economic advancement in the farthest places in our country other than tourism. His directive, together with the support of our Vice President Sara Duterte, is to allow tourism to be seen, felt, and heard in the countryside; to leave no one behind in the development of tourism," she said.

Frasco, the first tourism chief to visit Sultan Kudarat according to Governor Datu Pax Ali S. Mangudadatu, expressed her delight with the warm welcome she received from Sultan Kudarateños.

"I'm so happy to be here today to find myself in one of the most beautiful provinces of Mindanao that holds the key to the Filipino identity. Under the Marcos administration, the Department of Tourism is embarking on an aggressive program to give attention not only to our key destinations which we will continue to promote, but also to our emerging and lesser-known destinations. Panahon na sa Sultan Kudarat, inyu na ning oras na mulambo ang turismo sa inyong probinsya," the tourism chief said in mixed English and Bisaya.

"I have come here today in full force with the Department of Tourism officials as well as our regional office if only to emphasize the importance with which we view Sultan Kudarat [and SOCCSKSARGEN] as having great potential for tourism development, this is a manifestation of our commitment to you, and to the people of Sultan Kudarat [and the region]," she added.

Joining Frasco and Sultan Kudarat Governor Mangudadatu were Sultan Kudarat 1st district Representative Princess Bai Rihan Mangudadatu-Sakaluran, and Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines Chief Operating Officer Marga Nograles, as well as DOT officials Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, OIC-Undersecretary Verna Covar-Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Rica Bueno, and DOT-SOCCSKSARGEN Regional Director King R.

Arina.

"It is our commitment to the Department of Tourism and to President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. na sa lahat ng kanilang programa pagdating sa turismo ay 100 percent nasa likod nila tayo...100 percent ang ibibigay natin para ipakita na ang Sultan Kudarat at ang SOCCSKSARGEN is not only one of the optional places, ang dream po natin isa tayo sa primary places," said Governor Mangudadatu, affirming the province's full support to the DOT.

Meanwhile, Cong. Sakaluran said *"Isang malaaking karangalan po sa aming probinsya dahil finally po napansino ng DOT ang aming probinsya ng Sultan Kudarat. Maliit lamang po ang aming probinsya pero napakayaman sa ganda at sa kultura."*

Bisita, Be My Guest grand launch in SOCCSKSARGEN

With the colors of Mindanao as backdrop, the DOT launched the Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG)—its online tourism referral program—in a festive ceremony at the SP Hall of the Provincial Capitol in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat.

Performers from Teatro Kalakat and Hinugyaw dance group from Koronadal City enthralled the guests with cultural performances highlighting the rich heritage of SOCCSKSARGEN.

The BBMG provides incentives to Filipinos, from overseas Filipino workers to overseas Filipinos, across all parts of the world. Based on the program mechanics, Filipinos will be the "Sponsors", and the invited foreign nationals who will travel to the Philippines will be the "Invitees".

Among the exciting prizes at stake are condominium units from Megaworld Corporation and SMDC, house and lot from Amaia Land, shopping perks from Rustan's, and SM Supermalls.

Livelihood assistance

On the sidelines of her visit, Secretary Frasco turned over livelihood assistance amounting P200,000 to the Inugyunay Women's Weavers Association, a community-based Tourism Organization (CBTO) in Sultan Kudarat.

The Inugyunay Women's Weavers Association from Barangay New Passi, Tacurong City has created a sustainable and profitable business out of woven bags made of recycled plastic straps featuring hand-painted birds from their top tourist destination, the Baras Bird Sanctuary in Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat.

Through livelihood assistance, the Inugyunay Women's Weavers Association will be provided with high-speed sewing machines and other essentials for bag-making by the DOT-SOCCSKSARGEN.

The association is one of the three registered CBTO in Sultan Kudarat, which also include the Hinalaan River Guides in the town of Kalamansig, and the Katunggan River Guides Association in Lebak municipality, both of which had received livelihood assistance from the DOT last year. **DOT**

DOT, DND, DILG forge pact to make Mindanao a peaceful and viable tourist destination

Zamboanga City - In a historic move, the Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of National Defense (DND), and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), have joined together for the first ever Mindanao Tourism Convergence to forge a collaboration in promoting the region as a peaceful and viable destination for domestic and international travelers.

In a ceremonial signing last May 31 at Zamboanga City, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, Defense Secretary Carlito Galvez, Jr., represented by Undersecretary Angelito De Leon, and Interior Secretary Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos, Jr., signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to strengthen inter-agency partnership by ensuring that peace, security, and order are prioritized in tourism development programs as part of the DOT's seven-point agenda, with a specific focus on Mindanao.

The event also served as the avenue to manifest the Departments' commitment to promote responsible tourism, preserve the diverse natural and cultural heritage, and create an inclusive environment that would further foster growth in Mindanao and the entire country under the current administration.

DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, DND Assistant Secretary Henry Robinson, DILG Regional Director Paizal Abutazil, and Zamboanga City Mayor John Dalipe served as witnesses.

Delivering her message at the MOA signing event, Secretary Frasco thus underscored the crucial efforts to create an environment that fosters equal tourism opportunities for all regions, particularly in certain areas in the Philippines such as Mindanao, which may not have received much opportunities for tourism development in the past due to challenges brought about by untoward incidents.

To recall, no less than President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. described Mindanao as the country's "Land of Promise" and also called on to "start fulfilling that promise" in one of his speeches.

"At the beginning of the administration of President Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos Jr., he made very clear his intentions for the prioritization of tourism development in the Philippines, including and especially the reopening of Mindanao to tourism. As part of our commitment to the vision of our president, we have made strides towards the goal of fully reopening Mindanao to its tourism potential," the tourism chief said.

Secretary Frasco likewise emphasized that the time has finally come for Mindanao to be reintroduced to the world with its wonders, not only from natural resources but as well as its people, traditions, heritage assets, and culture.

"It is time to put to the fore the ethereal Mindanao beauty that has sometimes been relegated to the backburner, to highlight to the world its spectacular views, its wonderful and amazing culture as well as the warmth and love of the people of Mindanao. Time has come to fully promote your sites, your heritage, your culture, your people, and to reintroduce this region to the world."

"So, we signed this agreement today with high hopes and a firm resolve for us in the national government, to be able to deliver the necessary support from agencies of government to Mindanao

so that you will receive the opportunities for tourism development that you deserve," she added, announcing the DOT's plans at the same time to also invite foreign ambassadors to witness the majestic beauty of Mindanao to further the promotion.

Though not physically present at the Mindanao Tourism Convergence, Secretary Galvez has strongly forged the commitment of the DND for this momentous tourism undertaking.

"As we all know, Mindanao has a long history of being associated with violence, danger, and chaos. Terrorism has sought its ugly head and armed conflicts, not to mention the prevalence of crime, had sullied this promising area's reputation, but that is no longer the case. Through the National Tourism Development Plan or NTDP 2023 to 2028, and pursuant to the guidance of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the Department of Tourism is set to establish a Philippine tourism anchored on Filipino culture, heritage and identity, which aims to be sustainable, resilient and competitive in order to transform the Philippines into a tourism powerhouse in Asia," the Defense Secretary said in a message that Undersecretary De Leon delivered.

"The NTDP captures what the Philippines have to offer to the world and signifies our relentless pursuit of leveling up the industry through a global tourism brand. As it is here in this mandate to protect the country against external and internal threats and to provide support for social and economic development, we fully embrace our commitment to this endeavor as security and peace are preconditions to national development. It is vital to place a premium on the safety of our tourists and the overall security of tourism activities across the country," he added.

For his part, Secretary Abalos emphasized the role of tourist police and local government units (LGUs) to make the region a safe and viable destination for all.

"Through this convergence, the DILG commits to ensuring that our local police are properly deployed in tourist destinations. I also call on our LGUs to formulate their own local tourism plans, engage civic organizations in your localities, to collaborate and work together with the LGUs and other NGOs (non-government organizations) in promoting tourism developmental projects. We envision a tourism industry led by Secretary Frasco, that would really bring progress to the rural areas and promote economic activity in the provinces," Secretary Abalos said.

"Ma'am, suportado po namin kayo. Parati akong nasa likod ninyo," he proudly addressed Secretary Frasco, and also noted that the agreement is not just a piece of paper but a demonstration of the DILG's "dedication and realization of the agencies' aspirations, values, and objectives".

Why Zamboanga City?

In an address, Secretary Abalos emphasized how misimpression of Mindanao affected the region for years as far as tourism is concerned.

The case in point—Zamboanga City.

Secretary Abalos noted that while the devastating 2013 Zamboanga Siege has greatly affected local tourism in the area, the situation is far different now.

"For the last six years, records will show zero cases of

bombings here in Zamboanga City, zero cases of kidnappings here in Zamboanga City,” the Interior Secretary said, adding that Zamboanga City Police was also chosen as the best police station in the entire country.

“So, this alone will destroy this misimpression. ‘Yon po ang kalaban natin, yung impresyon ng tao na hindi naman totoo, at ‘yon ang pagtutulungan nating lahat. Mindanao has so much to offer—resources, the culture, and most importantly, the people,” he added.

Zamboanga City Mayor Dalipe then also invited guests and would-be visitors to “take a leap and make Mindanao a shining example of the profound impact that tourism, socio-economic government and nation building can achieve.”

“We stand united in our belief in the transformative power of tourism. Tourism is not just about attracting visitors, it is a catalyst for socio economic growth and a pathway towards understanding and harmony among diverse communities,” he said in an address.

“As we put pen to paper, we symbolize our dedication to Mindanao’s peace, progress, and prosperity. Each stroke of pen signifies a step towards building a region that drives on the principles of inclusivity, sustainability, and shared opportunities,” he added.

How will the agencies work together?

As the DOT acknowledges the objectives outlined in the Republic Act No. 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009 where the development of responsible tourism as a strategy for environmentally sustainable and community participatory tourism initiatives has been cited, the Department also aims to engage local communities, including indigenous peoples, in the preservation of both biophysical and cultural diversity.

Thus, the agreement among the three national government agencies shall set out the framework relative to the development of rural and insurgency-free communities and areas with tourism potential in the region, and other identified areas through the implementation of community-based tourism programs.

For its part, the DND will sustain the current peace and security programs of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) by providing evaluation and recommendations in the prospective areas for tourism development.

The DILG, on the other hand, will sustain programs to ensure peace and order in tourist destinations by deploying tourism police personnel and coordinating with LGUs to train police auxiliary forces for tourist security.

While the DOT shall be responsible for the development of tourism circuits, provide

tourism product development to emerging destinations as well as the provision of training intervention programs and livelihood assistance to tourism communities and workers.

Livelihood assistance for Mindanao CBTOs

Secretary Frasco also met with Mindanao Community-Based Tourism Organization (CBTO) members on the sidelines of the convergence meeting for a formal turnover of livelihood assistance worth P200,000 to the Sta. Cruz People’s Organization, the group managing Sta. Cruz Island, the famed protected area known to many as Zamboanga’s Pink Sand Beach.

“Nandito po kaming lahat nakikiisa sainyo sa pagbangon ng turismo sa Zamboanga Peninsula,” the Secretary said.

“Sana po sa pamamagitan ng project po na ito ay mas lumago pa yung inyong tourism destinations and your tourism offerings, knowing that additional boats can surely cater to the multitudes of tourists that are now visiting the island and trainings in terms of the Filipino brand of service excellence, can also elevate the quality of services that we give to our tourists,” she enthusiastically added.

She also handed tour guiding kits to some accredited tour guides in the province.

“Para din sa ating mga tour guides, napaka-importante po ng trabaho niyo kasi sa pamamagitan ng tour guiding, nabibigyan natin ng story yung ating mga tourist destinations. Our tour guides tell the Filipino story and that is why we are also here to give our assistance to our tour guides by giving you the things that you may need in order to do your job as efficiently and creatively as possible,” she said.

The event gave guests a peek of the exciting raffle prizes that await both the BBMG guests and sponsors once they sign up to join the program.

Other officials present at the event in Zamboanga City were Defense Spokesperson Dir. Arsenio R. Andolong, Western Mindanao Commander Lieutenant General Roy M. Galido; Brigadier General Alvin V. Luzon for the DND; Assistant Regional Director Carmelo Libot for the DILG; Undersecretary Myra Paz Abubakar, OIC Undersecretary Verna C. Buensuceso, Assistant Secretaries Maria Rica C. Bueno and Christopher Morales, Directors Ronald Conopio, Judilyn Quiachon, Annavie Lapitan, OIC Director Arlene Alipio, Regional Directors Dara May Cataluna, May Unchuan, Nelia Arina, Ivonnne Dumadag for the DOT; and representatives of the different provinces, cities, and municipalities of Zamboanga Peninsula as well as tourism stakeholders. **DOT**





DOT lauds Rosquillos Festival's showcase of local culture, contribution to local tourism

Liloan, Cebu - The enchanting Rosquillos Festival culminated on a high note last May 27 with the annual extravaganza not only tantalizing taste buds with its famous Rosquillos delicacy, but also showcasing the pivotal role of festivals and heritage in promoting tourism.

The event was graced by Vice President Sara Duterte and the former Mayor of the Municipality of Liloan, now Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

Throughout the festival, attendees reveled in a myriad of captivating activities that immersed them in Liloan's vibrant culture. From breathtaking cultural performances to native delicacies, visitors were transported into the heart of Cebuano traditions.

Vice President Duterte was thrilled by the traditions and cultural heritage that the festival brings. "I laud the municipal government of Liloan for emphasizing local tourism as a priority advocacy to support the growth of local entrepreneurs particularly those involve in the production of famous delicacies and cuisines that your hometown has long been known for. Clearly, the municipality of Liloan is a promising tourism destination," the Vice President said as she delivered her keynote address.

As a proud Liloan native, Secretary Frasco brought her unwavering passion for her hometown and the tourism industry to the Rosquillos Festival,

The event, a testament to Liloan's rich heritage and cultural pride, showcased the town's unique traditions, attracting locals and tourists alike.

Secretary Frasco, in her message, emphasized the importance of festivals in promoting local culture and fostering tourism growth.

The tourism chief said that the Rosquillos Festival's success lies in its ability to highlight the heritage of Liloan, while also stimulating economic growth by attracting



tourists. The festival, she added, showcases the richness of Cebuano culture, encouraging visitors to explore other local attractions and supporting the livelihoods of the community.

"Today is a historic day for our beloved town of Liloan for today we inaugurated what is now one of the best gateways to and from Cebu the Liloan Pier 88 where in no less than our President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos, Jr. and our Vice President Inday Sara Duterte were in attendance. Liloan celebrates its 178th year in honor of San Fernando El Rey. In this 178 years Liloan has been through its own share of difficulties challenges, triumphs, and victories, yet at every turn Liloan has always prevailed. We have prevailed because of our faith in the lord Sto Nino and in San Fernando El Rey. And we have prevailed because we have always honored our heritage," said Secretary Frasco, as she expressed her appreciation for Liloan's commitment to preserving its heritage. **DOT**



First Philippine Hop-On Hop-Off tours launched

Makati City - The first ever Philippine hop-on hop-off bus tours was launched by the Department of Tourism (DOT) as it gathered industry stakeholders for kick-off of the tours last May 28.

The Philippines Hop-On Hop-Off seeks to provide tourists—particularly group travelers and fully independent individual travelers (FITs)—with convenience and flexibility on when and how they will tour a destination through a seamless, contactless transport and tour booking system.

Delivering her speech at the Activity Area of Ayala Malls Glorietta, Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco noted that the bus tour's pilot launch in Makati marks an exciting time for the tourism industry, as the DOT aims to bring the project to other key destinations around the Philippines.

Upon full implementation of the Philippines Hop-On Hop-Off in Makati, tourists can take the bus in designated stops within the city to enjoy its best spots and activities following suggested itineraries curated by the DOT-NCR team per stop, with the option to avail of private and guided tours. The HOHO tour will cost around Php 1,000 per person.

The project, which takes inspiration from world-class hop-on hop-off buses in cities such as Abu Dhabi, Argentina, London, Madrid, New York, Singapore, among others, will feature a dedicated website with all essential information, a reloadable EMV-capable card, and to complete the tourist experience, a mobile app for booking tours, making cashless payments, GPS networked-bus arrival monitoring and video guides, as well as information on hotels, food, and tourism merchants.

For the purpose of giving a preview of the Makati Hub of the Philippines Hop-On Hop-Off, a curated tour commenced at Glorietta where Secretary Frasco together with other government and private sector officials led the ribbon-cutting and ceremonial toast.

The DOT Chief was joined by City of Makati officials led by First district Representative Romulo Peña Jr., Second district Representative Luis Campos, and Vice Mayor Monique Lagdameo, Head of International Relations Ms. Ichi Yabut, as well as DOT officials Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Maria Rica Bueno, and DOT-NCR Director Sharlene Zabala-Batin.

Meanwhile, Rep. Peña referred to the project as “a terrific way to experience what NCR has to offer at your own leisure.”

“Makati, the business hub, is proud to be included in the initial launch of this project. We are happy, actually very

happy, to invite and welcome you all to visit and enjoy Makati, the premier city,” enthused the Congressman.

“I am particularly happy that the Secretary, the DOT, has chosen our city to be the take off point for the Hop-On Hop-Off project,” said Rep. Campos.

“We see this as an opportunity to open our cultural treasures not only to our local citizens, Makatizens, but also to the rest of the country and to the rest of the world,” he added.

Also in attendance were leaders of tourism stakeholder associations, Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) President Bob Zozobrado, Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) President Fe Abiling-Yu, Ayala Malls Head of Marketing and Communications Ms. Chrissy Roa, and Ms. Marinel Barquin Lee of Positive Exposure, the integrator for the Philippines HOHO bus project.

The curated tour next took the guests to the Washington Sycip Park for interactive demo by artists and health drinks, followed by a quick stop in Ayala Malls Circuit for Filipino snacks, Museo ng Makati for coffee culture presentation, museum tour, and entertainment by Makati performers. The tour ended in Poblacion for a street party featuring performances by local artists and culinary treats from Makati's top-rated restaurants and bars.

In 2022, the DOT recorded 5.3 million overnight tourists in NCR, with Makati City ranking third out of 17 LGUs with the highest number of overnight arrivals at 969,927 visitors, after Pasay and Parañaque which took the first and second spots, respectively.

Meanwhile, preparations are already underway for the launch of the Philippines HOHO project in the cultural hub of Manila next. Both the Makati and Manila Hubs of the Philippines Hop-On Hop-Off program will become fully operational after the grand launch slated some time in June this year. **DOT**





Thankful and blessed for half a century of tourism

The Department of Tourism (DOT) celebrated its 50th Founding Anniversary last May 11.

Officials and employees came together as one DOT family through a Holy Mass of thanksgiving held at the DOT Central Office in Makati City.

In celebration of 50 golden years of the DOT, mass presider Rev. Fr. Ricardo Valencia, Jr. of the Our Lady of the Airways Parish, imparted in his homily the commandment of loving such as that of Christ, and to extend that love to one another while also highlighting the significance of fifty years and how *“it can be the end of what is thought to be perpetual and the beginning of a new chapter.”*

This message resonated well with Secretary Frasco as she described the new chapter as a *“turning point for this era of tourism”* in her address before all DOT employees and officials present.

“As I told you yesterday at our tree planting at Mt. Purro, what I feel has driven this Department to accomplish everything that it has for the past fifty years carrying forward the hopes and aspirations of millions of Filipinos that depend on tourism is really love – ‘Gugma’ as we say in Cebuano– love of our country, love of the Filipino people, love of ourselves as Filipinos, and love of our own families and communities,” she said, affirming of their efforts that led the Department to thrive and achieve the fifty-year milestone despite the challenges brought forth by the pandemic.

The Adopt A DOTree Program commenced at the Mt. Purro Nature Reserve yesterday (May 10) wherein DOT employees



were encouraged to be stewards for the environment through a tree planting activity.

“We’ve all enjoyed the gains of the Department of Tourism in these past fifty years and we welcome the next fifty-hundred years with a renewed sense of commitment, a continued devotion to service and an openness to evolution, innovation, newness, courage, and boldness. No longer will we rest on the laurels of everything that has been done because there is still so much work to do,” she added.

To conclude the event, all DOT employees received tokens of love in the form of sacks of rice from the personal funds of the Secretary and her husband, House Deputy Speaker Duke Frasco. **DOT**





Harmonizing Hospitality: ASEAN's MRA for Tourism Success

By: Office of Industry Manpower Development

The Department of Tourism (DOT) through the Office of Industry Manpower Development (OIMD), participated in the 29th ASEAN Tourism Professional Monitoring Committee (ATPMC) Meeting held last May 16, in Sudamala Resort Komodo, Labuan Bajo, Indonesia.

The ATPMC is the Governing Council of the Regional Secretariat for ASEAN Tourism Professionals, whose primary function is to promote the implementation of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) by providing support for its operations and management as well as implementation of related projects and activities.

The meeting discussed, among others, the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2016–2025, including the review and updating of the Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC) and the ASEAN Toolboxes, where the Philippines is the Lead Country Coordinator.

The meeting tackled the review and updating of the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) and discussed measures as to how it can keep up with post-pandemic trends and developments.

The DOT likewise reported on the progress and activities of the Philippine National Tourism Professional Board (NTPB) and the Tourism Professional Certification Board (TPCB).

The Tourism Industry Board Foundation, Inc. (TIBFI) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) are the duly recognized NTPB and TPCB, respectively, in the implementation of the MRA-TP.

The Philippine delegation was led by Director Arlene Alipio, together with Jennifer Jacobo and Kytlin Kyla Principio. **DOT**



ON THE GROUND NEWS

Regional News Update

Tourist Safety First: Integrated TOPCOP training in Sorsogon



The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region 5, in partnership with the Provincial Government of Sorsogon, the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) Region 5, and the Sorsogon Police Provincial Office (SPPO), held an Integrated Tourist-Oriented Police for Community Order and Protection (TOPCOP) Training last May 15 to 19 at Sorsogon City.

The training, aimed at equipping tourist police officers with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide safety and security to tourists and tourism establishments in the province, covered topics such as tourism overview, tourist safety, community service-oriented policing, first-aid, local history, and culture, the Filipino brand of service excellence, and familiarization tour.

This is the fourth installment of the iTOPCOP training series that the DOT regional office had conducted since October last year.

The next training program will be held in Naga City, Camarines Sur on June 5 to 9, 2023. **DOT**



DOT NorthMin revs up bike tourism as Camiguin Isle Bike Tour attracts 146 participants

By: DOT-10

Cagayan de Oro - The day dawned with enthusiasm as 146 bikers from Camiguin, Cagayan de Oro, Bukidnon, and some from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Regional Office 10 geared up early at 5:00 a.m. for the Camiguin Isle Bike Tour last May 28.

The high-spirited participants gathered at the New Provincial Capitol Grounds in Mambajao, Camiguin, to kick off the biggest biking event of the year under the Bike NorthMin campaign program.

The bike tour featured a 64-kilometer circumferential road with the following stops: Tongatok in Mambajao, Barangay Looc in Catarman, Sagay Overpass, Guinsiliban Municipal Hall, and the San Roque Barangay Hall. Bikers must secure the color-coded stickers from each stop to qualify for the raffle prizes. Refreshments were also provided for the bikers along the way.

Department of Tourism 10 Regional Director Marie Elaine Unchuan also joined the bike tour and reminded everyone that the event aims to promote sustainable bike tourism and a healthy lifestyle, generate economic opportunities for local communities,

and showcase the local destinations and offerings of the scenic island province.

"We want to convert bikers not just as sports enthusiasts but as tourists. We also want our bikers, aside from having fun and being healthy, to be tourists and help our local economy," RD Unchuan underscored during her speech at the Fellowship Night and Orientation held at the New Provincial Capitol Building on May 27 (Saturday).

She added that their visit to Camiguin had a significant impact on the island and all over Northern Mindanao.

She also expressed her gratitude to the Local Government Unit of Camiguin and the Provincial Tourism Office for their immense support and to the bike clubs for their invaluable participation in the event.

The 146 participants were composed of bikers of all ages, with an 11-year-old girl as the youngest and a 68-year-old man as the oldest among the group. Both were awarded, respectively, during the closing program at noon.

Irvil Bermudo from Catarman, Camiguin, took home the grand raffle prize, a Bacini Bike sponsored by the R.O.X. Philippines. **DOT**



TOURISM RELATED EVENTS



Fund-raising Gala
by the Pacific Asia Travel Association Philippines Chapter



DOT and PRA's joint implementation of the Micro Retail Tourism
2.0 "Essential Innovations and Product Enhancement"



Go Negosyo Tourism Summit 2023 in Cebu



Pre Launch of the 2024 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference
on Disaster Risk Reduction



1st Dive Committee Meeting



Tourism Development Plan Convergence Meeting



Multisectoral Sustainability Forum by the Manila Times



Inauguration ceremony of the
Plaza del Gobernador: Liwasan ng Mamamayan

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TO OUR JUNE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS

1 Ferdinand Jumapao	12 Genesis Raenani Renos	22 Eleanor Santos
1 Cynthia Monzon	14 Blando Soriano	24 Ralph Rodney Lozano
2 Czarina Cruz	17 Johnny Delfin	25 Realyn Manalo
3 Janen Punit	17 Analiza Macababbad	26 Evangeline Dadat
4 Ma. Teresa Esguerra	18 Jovita Ganongan	26 Marcos Aradanas
4 June Garduque	18 Jennifer Rucio	26 Kristine Andres
5 Dennis Atienza	19 Susan Ramirez	26 Virgilio Mijos
5 Lia Insigne	20 Judy Gabato	26 Gleisa Marie Biscocho
6 Michael John Nicolas	20 Toni Rimando	28 Beverly Tapongot
7 Norberto Lumbre	20 Czarina Morandarte	28 Richmond Patrick Jimenez
7 Joanilee Roda	21 Russel Dela Cruz	28 Riza Marie Macaibay
10 Ma. Catherina Apostol	21 Micah Maria Anne Sales	29 Anneli Olin
12 Gina Marie Libery Esmaña		

